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Problems and Challenges Faced by Non-Muslim Students in achieving Higher Education at universities of Pakistan: An Evaluative Study

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Abstract

Introduction: This study examines Pakistani non-Muslim university students' challenges and how they affect their self-esteem. Understanding non-Muslim students' challenges is essential for inclusiveness and a supportive learning environment in increasingly diverse schools.

Methodology: This quantitative study surveyed Pakistani non-Muslim university students about their opinions. Curriculum and Literature, Peer and Teacher views, Rights of Religious Minorities, Inclusive Teaching Skills Techniques, and Student Self-Esteem (CARIS) was a self-created survey tool to assess students' experiences and views 91 male and 61 female non-Muslim students from 46 public and 106 private Pakistani universities were purposefully selected. SPSS 22 was used for descriptive analysis and Smart-PLS 3.9 for SEM analysis.

Results/Findings: All four hypotheses greatly increased non-Muslim pupils' self-esteem. Results showed that students had

strong opinions on curriculum, literature, attitudes, and rights issues. Non-Muslim students' experiences were not significantly different by gender, institute type (public vs. private), or province. Age and programme of study differed significantly among non-Muslim students.

Future Direction: *This study emphasises the need for specific interventions for Pakistani non-Muslim university students. Future study should address academic content and literature concerns, improve peer-teacher interactions, and promote diversity in Pakistani universities. More in-depth mixed-method research are needed to understand non-Muslim students' educational experiences and requirements.*

Keywords: Curriculum Academic Literature, Attitude of peers/Teachers, Inclusive Teaching strategies and Self-esteem of students

Introduction

Pakistan is a predominantly Muslim nation with a wide variety of cultures, languages, ethnic groupings, religions, and sects. The most recent census was held in 2017, and the government approved the figures on minorities in December 2020; nevertheless, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics website lacks current information on minorities. According to the 2021 Census, 3.72 per cent of the country's population comprises religious minorities. 1.59 % of the populace are Christians, 1.60 % are Hindus, 0.22 % are Ahmadis, 0.25 % are Scheduled Castes, and 0.07 % are other religions (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Pakistan came into being in 1947 as an Islamic republic state. It means it ensures equal rights to their citizens as per the rights given by Islam and the rights given by the republic state. The population of Pakistan comprises 95% Muslims and 5% Non-Muslims. These Non-Muslims are known as the religious minority as they agreed upon being non-Muslim except Ahmadis Muslims make up 96.47 percent of the population of Pakistan, Hindus 2.14 percent, Christians 1.27 percent, Ahmadis 0.09 percent, and others (Bahais et al.) make 0.02 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (2017), citing data from the 2017 Pakistan census (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 1998, 2017).

The constitution of Pakistan grants equal rights and opportunities to all citizens without discrimination of gender, ethnicity, language, or religion. Article 20-A, 22-1, and 25-1 of the constitution of Pakistan guarantees equal religious rights to all citizens, and they have

the right to practice religious activities. Article 25-A talks about the right of every citizen to get an education (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

In Pakistan, education is the state's responsibility, and after the 18th amendment, it is also the responsibility of the provinces. Universities of Pakistan are responsible for serving and imparting higher education in Pakistan to all their citizens without any discrimination of gender, caste, creed, ethnicity, language, or religion. Several political and religious organizations exist in universities, and they propagate their political and religious agenda; sometimes, they forcefully impose their agenda on university employees and students. Non-Muslim students are vulnerable in such an environment because they have no political and religious support from society (Das, 2010). According to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom report, Pakistani teachers and students understand the diversity of religions and respect Non-Muslims. Still, most need to be made aware of the rights of Non-Muslims. Muslim students showed anger against Non-Muslim because they perceived that Non-Muslims are disrespectful to Islam and Muslims (Rehman, 2021).

Minorities exist all over the globe. It is a group of people with separate ethnic, language, and religious identities compared to the rest of the country's population. Pakistan also has a religious minority known as Non-Muslims like Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis, Bahais, Sikhs, Buddhists, etc. These all are agreed as being Non-Muslims except Ahmadis. The constitution of Pakistan and international law granted and protected the rights of minorities in Pakistan. Freedom of speech, culture, traditions, language, and religion and the right to education for every citizen without discrimination are the major rights of all minorities living in a country. Although they have equal rights practically, they face many problems and challenges during their education, jobs, and social adjustment (Akram et al., 2021).

Several researchers have observed and revealed that Non-Muslim students face discrimination, biases, bullying, and derogatory remarks by the faculty and peer groups. They are restricted from celebrating their culture, traditions, and university religious activities. Non-inclusive curriculum, concepts, and language of literature taught at higher education do not support religious harmony and peace, resulting in fear and anxiety among Non-Muslim students and their parents. Sometimes, faculty's biased attitude distorts students' personality (Curtis, 2016; Dilawar et al., 2014; Mehfooz, 2021).

Objectives of the study

The study based on the following objectives;

- To examine the experience of Non-Muslim students about problems and challenges in terms of their demographics in achieving higher education at universities of Pakistan.
- To find out the problems and challenges experience by the Non-Muslim students and its effect on their Self-Esteem in achieving higher education at universities of Pakistan.

Research Questions

Following are the research questions to address the Non-muslim students problems:

- What are the perceptions of non-muslim students regarding problems and challenges faced by them in terms of demographics in achieving higher education at universities of Pakistan?
- What are the problems and challenges of Non-Muslim students and its effect on their Self-Esteem in terms of demographics in achieving higher education at universities of Pakistan?

Literature review

As viewed through the lens of many world religions, the modern understanding of the world categorizes the entire planet into distinct regions. In many Asian countries, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists comprise most of the population. In contrast, in most Western nations, Christians, Jews, and people who do not identify with any religion make up most of the population. Although many countries, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, and the United Arab Emirates, among others, claim to be Islamic nations, none of these so-called Islamic governments are primarily populated by a population that is exclusively composed of Muslims. In many states, people of different religions face discrimination because of their beliefs. Unfortunately, some countries have issued lists of religious organizations that they identify as potentially hazardous sects, even though international instruments forbid discrimination against all minority groups (Khan & Rahman, 2009; Rahman & Akram, 2020).

This violates people's right to religious freedom, the most fundamental of basic human rights. The modern world can be broken down into several distinct sections when viewed through the lens of several religions. Most of the population in many nations in the south comprises Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists. In contrast, most of the population in many

countries in the north, notably Western countries, comprises Christians, Jews, and those who do not identify with any religion (Banducci et al., 2004). In addition to Pakistan, several other nations are recognized as Islamic governments. None of these nations, however, has a population that is made up entirely of Muslims; rather, they all have religious minorities that are not made up of Muslims.

Similarly, most European countries are home to populations that identify as Christian or have no religious affiliation. Religious minorities make up a relatively insignificant fraction of the population of Pakistan, yet they do exist. Christians, Hindus, Baha'is, Ahmadis, Sikhs, Parsis (Zoroastrians), Kalashis, and Buddhists are all examples of diverse religious minority groups (Saleem, 2000; Yousuf & Barrech, 2022).

There are several types of a minority but the academic literature discussed mostly three types,

1. Ethnic Minority
2. Religious minority
3. Gender Minority

The minority does not mean a lesser population as a common literature portrait. It is the group of people that faced discrimination and biases in terms of race, religion, gender, and language that may be called a minority group. In Pakistan, the Non-Muslim Population often faces discrimination in their social life, particularly in the field of education, and is known as a minority group.

According to Gills (2006), Students belonging to religious minorities (Non-Muslims) faced problems accessing education. However, diversity in culture, ethnicity, language, and religion is an important term often discussed in educational literature. Diversity is the beauty of education and society, but if it crosses the limit, it develops discrimination that creates social unrest. The problems and challenges of Non-Muslim students in achieving higher education are discussed under the following headings.

- I. Curriculum and academic literature
- II. Attitude of teachers and peer group
- III. Constitution of Pakistan and rights of religious minority
- IV. Inclusive teaching strategies and skills

Curriculum and Academic Literature

From 1947 to the present, all national education programmes and plans overlooked the fundamental rights of non-Muslim students and instructors, even though the Pakistani

constitution of 1973 protected them. Several forms of studies show that the current educational system is biased against religious minorities. Minority groups' needs and rights are not effectively addressed in the curriculum (Rahman, 2012; Hussain et al., 2011). According to experts, the public sector curriculum does not reflect minority communities' religious and cultural views.

The curriculum that prevails in higher education is mostly non-inclusive. The academic literature on higher education does not represent the Non-Muslim religious group. The language used in academic literature is biased and discriminatory to Non-Muslim students. Language, literature, history, social and Pakistan studies, and religious subjects have derogatory remarks about Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians. It has been reported in several works of literature that abusive language is common to use. Literature portrays Non-Muslim as the enemy of Islam and Muslims; due to this reason, some ethnic, religious, and political groups orally and even physical bullying and pass derogatory remarks against such students, their culture, and religion. There is no provision for Non-Muslim students to celebrate their cultural and religious activities at higher education like Muslim students. Non-Muslim students work in isolation, feeling fear and anxiety during their academic careers. In its fourth chapter, the National Education Policy (2009) stated: "Provision shall be made for the teaching of ethics/moral education instead of Islamiyat, and the subject-specific teacher shall be appointed according to the criteria" (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Attitude of Teachers and Peer Group

Teaching is a noble profession in society. Professionalism is the emerging demand in teaching. That is why it is much more than saying and explaining. Professional teachers guide students in socialization, character-building, and personality development. Many factors affect student academic performance, and a teacher's positive attitude is one of them. It motivates students toward the teaching and learning process. It develops self-confidence, communication skills, and social and emotional development (Oad, Khan & Khoso, 2020).

On the other hand, the teacher's negative attitude demotivates students and derails their social and emotional development. Isolation, shyness, less confidence, passiveness, and fear of sharing their narratives. Teachers' attitudes create fear and anxiety among Non-Muslim students. The attitude of peer groups also plays a vital role in students' lives, particularly those of a religious minority. It develops strong relationships among all social

identities and creates harmony in society. Love, respect, hard work, and sympathy are the essence of a positive attitude. Students belonging to religious and political groups often pass derogatory remarks against the culture, tradition, language, and religion to non-Muslim students. Such remarks negatively impacted the personality and academic performance of Non-Muslim students. They fear going to universities, hate such an education system, and sometimes leave their education (Rahman, 2021).

Ajmal, Sultana, Ain, and Tahira (2011) investigated Muslim students' attitudes toward Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jews in Pakistan. Jews and Hindus were perceived more adversely than Sikhs and Christians, according to the results. The writers concluded that the justifiable animosity towards Israel and India has contributed to their unfavourable image. Others assert that a curriculum that glorifies militancy and violence against non-Muslims is the primary cause of the challenges experienced by minority children in public schools. The unequal treatment in public schools frequently results in Christian kids being compelled to eat at separate tables. Afzal (2015) revealed that Muslim students and teachers in Pakistan describe treating minorities perfectly well. They acknowledged that Pakistan's minorities are equal citizens.

Constitution of Pakistan and the rights of religious minority

Non-Muslim students belong to the religious minority. The constitution of Pakistan 1973 granted all rights of citizenship to Non-Muslims. The International Declaration of Human Rights also gives equal rights to all minorities across the globe. Freedom of expression, freedom of speech, right to culture and religion, and right to education are the major rights of a religious minority (Batool, 2018). Although Non-Muslim students in higher education have equal rights to Muslim students, the practices are quite different. Non-Muslim students are restricted from celebrating holly (Hindu tradition) and Christmas (Christian tradition) even though they are restricted from celebrating their cultural days. There is no common Religious area at universities for Non-Muslim students to perform their obligatory duties (Akram et al., 2021; Rahman, 2021).

The socioeconomic condition of religious minorities in Pakistan is precarious (Ackerman, 2018). Indicators of the socioeconomic conditions of religious minorities indicate that they are generally lagging, with Christians being the most vulnerable (Khalid & Anwar,

2018). Similarly, Hindus in Pakistan and Sindh province are economically disadvantaged (South Asia Partnership-Pakistan, 2015).

The National Council for Justice and Peace (NCJP) in Pakistan looked into how literate religious minorities were. According to the NCJP (2014), Punjab's average literacy rate for Christians is 34%, lower than the country's overall literacy rate of 46.56 per cent. The rate is appallingly low among women of colour. Hindus and other religious groups, such as Parsis, Buddhists, and Sikhs, have average literacy rates of 34%, 19%, and 17%, respectively. The percentage is greater, at 51.67 per cent, among Ahmadis. Despite playing a significant economic role in the country's development, religious minorities are barely visible from a sociopolitical perspective (Oad & Niazi, 2021). Being victims of unwelcome regular occurrences, social discrimination, religious intolerance, violent acts, and prejudiced behaviour (FIDH/HRCF, 2014), minority populations are confined to crowded colonies. In Pakistan, several issues contribute to religious minorities' pessimism, such as their segregation in school curricula (Tariq, 2012).

Lack of knowledge of legal, social, and religious rights, along with limited ability and self-conceived/imposed limitations, impedes their potential contribution to the nation's development (MRG/SDPI, 2014). The murder of religious minorities under the protection of blasphemy laws has occurred repeatedly (Mehfooz, 2021). These homicides span from state officials to members of common religious minorities, encompassing both men and women. Some of the murders have been sanctioned by religious organizations (Yousuf & Barrech, 2022).

Inclusive Teaching Strategies and Skills

Teachers serving in higher education at universities are mostly highly qualified but are untrained. They need a diploma, degree, or certification in teacher training. Most teachers must know teaching strategies, tactics, techniques, and methodology. They did not know education philosophy and psychology, so they needed to understand the aim and objectives of higher education, student behaviour and modification techniques, and assessment techniques. They need to improve in pedagogical skills. A multicultural, multilingual, and multi-religious classroom exists in higher education. Inclusive teaching strategies and skills only address this diversity. The government of Pakistan, the Higher Education Commission, and the Ministry on Education and Training took several steps to improve quality education. Mahmood,

Hussain and Irfanullah (2018) wrote that the academia from Pakistan is kept silent on the problems and issues of Non-Muslim students. It is time to work on an Inclusive curriculum, inclusive literature, and inclusive teaching methodology that truly represents the population without discrimination. There is a desire to understand the problems and challenges of Non-Muslim students in higher education (Saeed et al., 2023).

Self-Esteem of Students

Self-esteem is how a person feels about how valuable he or she is (Rosenberg, 2015). Weiten (2004) says there are two types of self-esteem: implicit and explicit. The person's unconscious self-evaluation is their implicit self-esteem, while explicit self-esteem is more reflective and aware. Recently, it has become clear how important self-esteem is as a factor (Kim & Koh, 2018; Baturay & Toker, 2017).

Self-esteem is also a possible factor in academic success. Multiple studies have found a strong link between how students feel about themselves and how well they do in school. Pullmann and Allik (2008) found that having a high overall sense of self-worth is a major predictor of doing well in school. Saadat, Ghasemzadeh, and Soleimani (2012) found that students' academic and family self-esteem helped them do well in school. A high sense of self-worth is important because it protects students from the bad effects of failure and other bad things (Zeigler-Hill et al., 2013). Li, Han, Wang, Sun, and Cheng (2018) said that students with high self-esteem are more likely to be motivated and have clear goals, which makes them more likely to get good grades.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework's pictorial representation (Refer to Figure 1) is presented below. This conceptual framework depicts that the problems and challenges of Non-Muslim students in higher education institutions directly affect their self-esteem. The figure also indicates that the attitude of peers and teachers group moderates the effect of problems and challenges of Non-Muslim students in higher education institutions on their self-esteem at the university level.

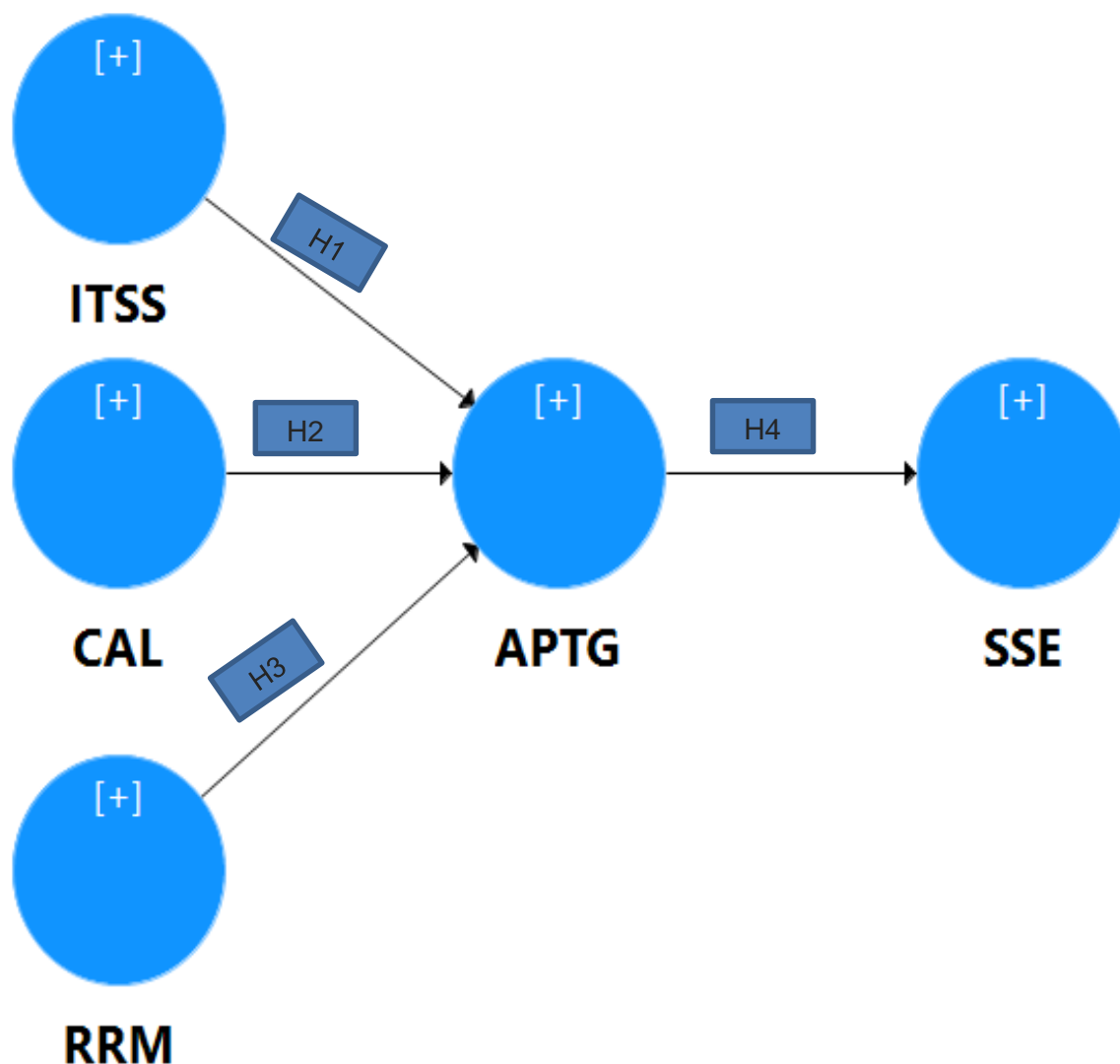


Figure.1: Conceptual Framework

CAL: Curriculum and academic literature

APTG: Attitude of peers and teachers group

RRM: Constitution of Pakistan and rights of religious minority

ITSS: Inclusive teaching strategies and skills

SSE: Students Self-Esteem

Methodology

This research aimed to analyze the problems and difficulties that non-Muslim university students in Pakistan confront and to determine how such difficulties impact their sense of self-worth. The quantitative research design (Creswell, 2014), along with the survey approach (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014), was utilized in this study to meet the

research objectives of the study. A self-developed questionnaire CARIS was used to find out what non-Muslim university students from all over Pakistan about curriculum and literature, attitudes of peers and teachers' groups, rights and religious minorities, inclusive teaching skills strategies, and student self-esteem. The respondents were selected through purposive sampling, which involved 152 non-Muslim students enrolled in higher education programs in 2021-2022. The reason behind using purposive sampling was that the study was only focused on a particular minority group as per describe by (Cresswell, 2014; Ahmad, Thomas, & Hamid, 2020).

The data was collected by using CARIS scale and online google form. The self-developed CARIS scale consists of five main sections, which are: Curriculum and academic literature (08 items), the attitude of peers and teachers' group (10 items), rights and religious minorities (07 items), inclusive teaching skills strategies (06 items) and student self-esteem (06 items). On a five-point Likert scale, 1 means "Strongly Disagree," 2 means "Disagree," 3 means "Neutral," 4 means "Agree," and 5 means "Strongly Agree." The language and format were looked at to see if they were right. The experts in non-Muslim curriculum, academic literature, and language examined content validity of the CARIS scale. Initially, the reliability was determined through SPSS 22 and Smart-PLS version 3.9. The output results were used to evaluate the construct validity through Smart-PLS 3.9. Measurements of content validity, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were made to make sure the measurement or outer model had sufficient validity and reliability. Given that factor loading (see Table -) was greater than 0.7, the model's content validity was attained (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). For the internal consistency reliability of the research model, Cronbach's alpha is the lower boundary and composite reliability (CR) is the upper barrier (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). The table shows that all of the components' Cronbach's Alpha and CR values are higher than the cutoff point (minimum = 0.7). Therefore, only those items up to the threshold level and above 0.70 were selected, and all the remaining items below the threshold of 0.70 were deleted from the model. This explains how the current research's construct validity and reliability were established (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). The convergent validity is maintained (Hair et al., 2019) since all factor loadings were larger than 0.7 (Table 3) and all average variance extracted (AVE) values were greater than 0.5 (Table 4). This shows that the set of questions for each component measures that factor.

Data Analysis and Results

Data Analysis Objective and Research Question-1

“What are the perceptions of non-muslim students regarding problems and challenges faced by them in terms of demographics in achieving higher education at universities of Pakistan?”

Demographics of the study

Table 1 The Research Demographic details

Demographic with sample size n= 152		Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
University Type	Public	46	30.3
	Private	106	69.7
	Total	152	100
Gender	Male	91	59.9
	Female	61	40.1
	Total	152	100
Age	20-25 Yrs	143	94.1
	26-30 Yrs	03	2.0
	31-35 Yrs	00	00
	36. &Above	06	3.9
	Total	152	100
Program	BS	127	83.5
	MS/M.Phil	03	2.0
	PhD	00	00
	Others	22	14.5
	Total	152	100
Province	Sindh	140	92.1
	Punjab	02	1.3
	KPK	02	1.3
	Baluchistan	07	4.6
	Gilgit Baltistan	01	0.7
	Total	152	100

Table 1 provides demographic details of the participants. The table indicates that 30.3% of students from public universities and 69.7% were from private universities, females students were 40.1% and 59.9% were male students who participated in this study age of the students 20-25 years were 94.1%, 26-30 years 02% and above 36 years were 3.9%, 83.5% were enrolled in BS program, 02% were from MS/M. Phil and 14.5% were from other programs and 92.1% were from Sindh province, 1.3% were from Punjab and KPK provinces, 4.6% were from Baluchistan, and 0.7% from Gilgit Baltistan.

Table 2 Comparison of university type on problems and challenges

University	N	Mean	S. D	Df	t	P
Public	46	3.262	0.585	150	1.693	0.093
Private	106	3.094	0.551			

$p > 0.05$

An independent sample t-test was conducted to examine the difference among opinion of non-muslim students by their institution on problem and challenges faced by them in achieving higher education. The test was not significant, $t(150) = 1.693$, $p = 0.093$. Problem and challenges for public university students ($M=3.262$, $S.D=0.585$) as compared to the problems and challenges for private university students ($M=3.094$, $SD=0.551$). Results of the study showed that there was no difference among opinion of non-muslim students by their type of institute on problems and challenges they face during achieving higher education.

Table 3 Comparison of student's gender on problems and challenges

Gender	N	Mean	S. D	Df	t	P
Male	91	3.098	0.573	150	-1.228	0.221
Female	61	3.213	0.549			

$p > 0.05$

An independent sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the difference among opinion of male and female non-muslim students on problem and challenges faced by them in achieving higher education. The test was not significant, $t(150) = -1.228$, $p = 0.221$. Problem and challenges for male students ($M=3.098$, $S.D=0.573$) as compared to the problems and challenges for female students ($M=3.213$, $SD=0.549$). Results of the study showed that there was no difference between opinion of non-muslim students by their gender on problems and challenges they face during achieving higher education.

Table 4 Comparison of non muslim students by their age on problems and challenges.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.330	2	4.665	17.865	0.000
Within Groups	38.909	149	0.261		
Total	48.220	151			

$p > 0.05$

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the perception of non-muslim students by their age on problems and challenges in achieving higher education institutes. An analysis of variance showed that there was significant difference among opinion of students by their age on their problems and challenges. The test was significant, $F(2, 149) =$

17.865 p (0.000). Findings of the study showed that perceptions of non-muslim students by their age were different as age wise on problems and challenges. Perception of respondents of age group from more than 36 years was significant.

Table 5 Comparison of non muslim students by their program on problems and challenges.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.132	2	3.066	10.849	0.000
Within Groups	42.108	149	0.283		
Total	48.240	151			

p>0.05

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the perception of non-muslim students by their university program they enrolled on problems and challenges in nachieving higher education. An analysis of variance showed that there was significant difference between opinion of students by enrolled program on their problems and challenges. The test was significant, $F(2, 149) = 10.849$ p (0.000). Findings of the study showed that perceptions of non-muslim students by their university program were different on problems and challenges. Perception of respondents of program group from others was significant.

Table 6 Comparison of non muslim students by province on problems and challenges.

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	0.942	4	0.235	0.732	0.572
Within Groups	47.298	147	0.322		
Total	48.240	151			

p>0.05

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the perception of non-muslim students by province wise on problems and challenges during achieving higher education. An analysis of variance showed that there was no significant difference among opinion of non-muslim students by province wise on problem and challenges in achieving higher education. The test was not significant, $F(4, 147) = 0.732$ p (0.572). Results of the study revealed that perceptions of non-muslim students by province wise were same on problems and challenges they are facing during higher education.

Data Analysis Objective and Research Question-2

“What are the problems and challenges of Non-Muslim students and its effect on their Self-Esteem in terms of demograpgics in achieving higher education at universities of Pakistan?”

The Measurement Model

By using the Smart PLS version, 3.9 data were analyzed. Smart PLS was used to validate the external model's validity and reliability and to test the research hypothesis (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2015). It is one of the sophisticated statistical tools extensively used for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Table 7

Construct, Reliability & Validity

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
APTG	0.871	0.878	0.921	0.795
CAL	0.768	0.823	0.863	0.679
ITSS	0.763	0.769	0.865	0.681
RRM	0.747	0.776	0.854	0.661
SSE	0.911	0.946	0.943	0.848

The construct reliability and validity of the study model are displayed in Table 7. Cronbach's alpha is a lower constraint on the research model's internal consistency dependability. According to Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019), however, the composite reliability (CR) is a higher limit. Cronbach's alpha and CR in Table 7 are greater than the minimum value of 0.7 but less than the maximum value of 0.95. This table also displays the average variance extracted (AVE) values, which exceeded the minimal cutoff value of 0.05 (Hair et al., 2013).

Table 8: *Fornell-Larcker Criterion*

	APTG	CAL	ITSS	RRM	SSE
APTG	0.892				
CAL	0.547	0.824			
ITSS	0.731	0.308	0.825		
RRM	0.849	0.416	0.786	0.813	
SSE	0.800	0.448	0.689	0.693	0.921

The Fornell-Larcker criterion can be seen in Table 8, where the square roots of the AVE values for the diagonal are greater than the AVE values in the rows and columns for each individual construct (Fornell&Larcker, 1981: Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015).

Table 9 Outer Loadings

Factor Loadings	CAL	RRM	APTG	ITSS	SSE
CAL6	0.882				
CAL7	0.833				
CAL8	0.752				
RRM3		0.813			
RRM4		0.859			
RRM7		0.764			
APTG1			0.854		
APTG2			0.918		
APTG5			0.902		
ITSS1				0.746	
ITSS3				0.880	
ITSS4				0.845	
SSE1					0.956
SSE4					0.948
SSE6					0.855

CAL= Curriculum and Academic Literature;

RRM=Rights and Religious Minority;

APTG= Attitude of Peers and Teachers Group;

ITSS= Inclusive Teaching Strategies and Skills;

SSE= Students Self-Esteem

The content validity was accomplished by factor loading of the model. Table 9 presents the factor loading data, demonstrating that all factor loadings were initially greater than 0.7. As described by (Hair et al., 2019; Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011).

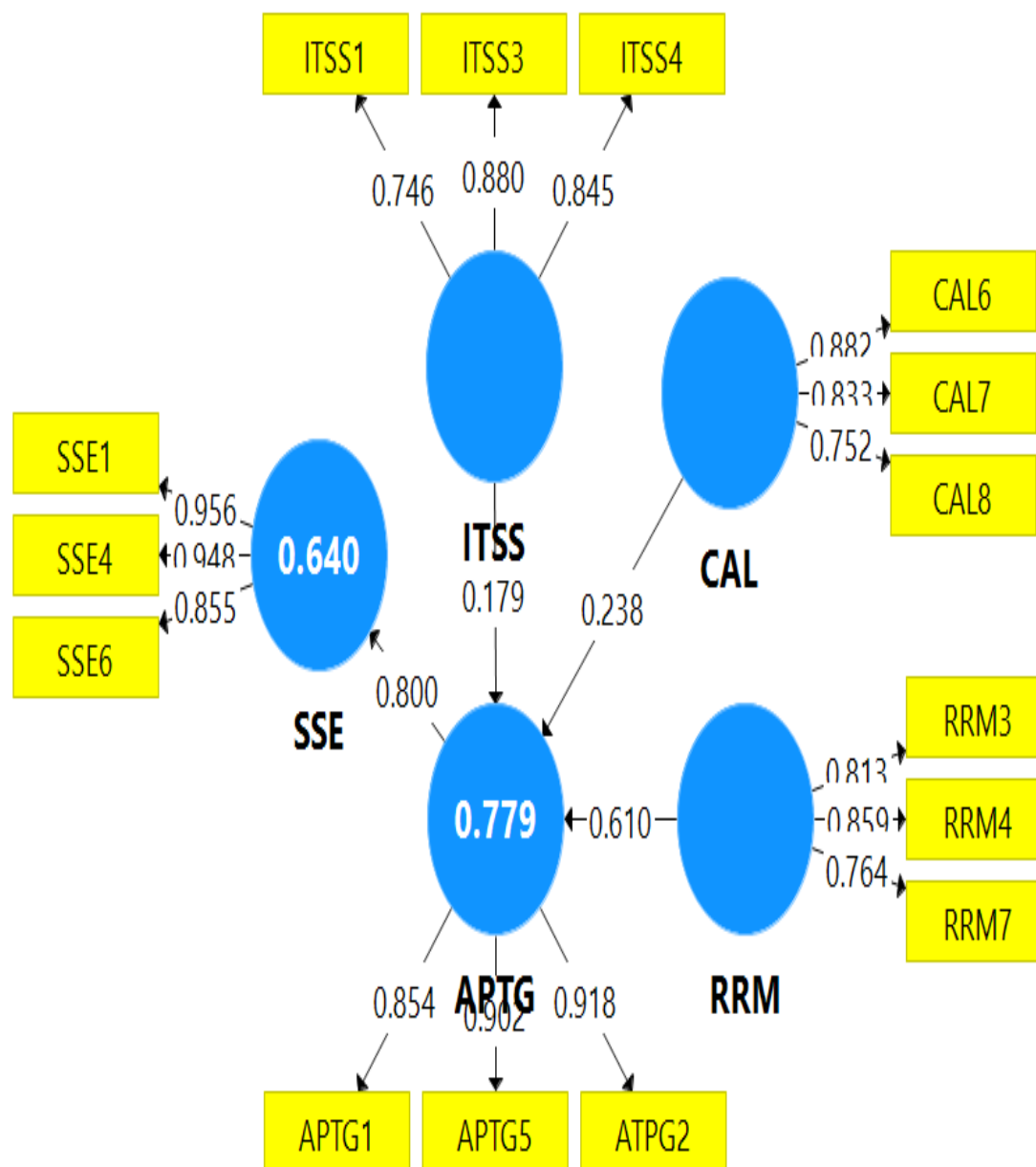


Figure.2:

Table 10 Inner VIF Values

	APTG	CAL	ITSS	RRM	SSE
APTG					1.000
CAL	1.211				
ITSS	2.618				
RRM	2.866				
SSE					

The results of the study of the inner VIF statistics are displayed in Table 10, which also demonstrates that the VIF values are consistently lower than the threshold value of 5. Given that an estimate of the model does not reach critical levels in any of the constructs, collinearity does not present any challenges in terms of the potential for difficulties.

Table 11: f^2

	APTG	CAL	ITSS	RRM	SSE
APTG					1.776
CAL	0.212				
ITSS	0.055				
RRM	0.588				
SSE					

The Structural Model

Following an analysis and determination of the research model's validity and reliability, the Partial Least Squares- Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) in Smart PLS 3.9 was selected (Ringle et al., 2015) as the methodology to test the hypotheses that were proposed for the research. The PLS-SEM methodology offers better estimates than other methods focused on covariance (Hair et al., 2013) and thus was adopted for the current study. As shown in Table 12, all factors of problems and challenges of non-Muslim students, including Curriculum and Academic Literature (CAL) ($t = 6.560$, $p = 0.000$), Attitude of Peers and Teachers Group (APTG) ($t = 20.925$, $p = 0.000$), Inclusive Teaching Skills and Strategies, (ITSS) ($t = 2.490$, $p = 0.013$) and Rights and Religious Minority (RRM) ($t = 7.568$, $p = 0.000$), have a positive and significant impact on self-esteem of students at the university level. It thus concluded that four hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) for the current research were supported.

Table 12 Hypothesis testing results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values	Decision
CAL-> PTG	0.238	0.232	0.036	6.560	0.000	Supported
APTG->SSE	0.800	0.800	0.038	20.925	0.000	Supported
ITSS-> PTG	0.179	0.164	0.072	2.490	0.013	Supported
RRM->APTG	0.610	0.628	0.081	7.568	0.000	Supported

$p < 0.05$

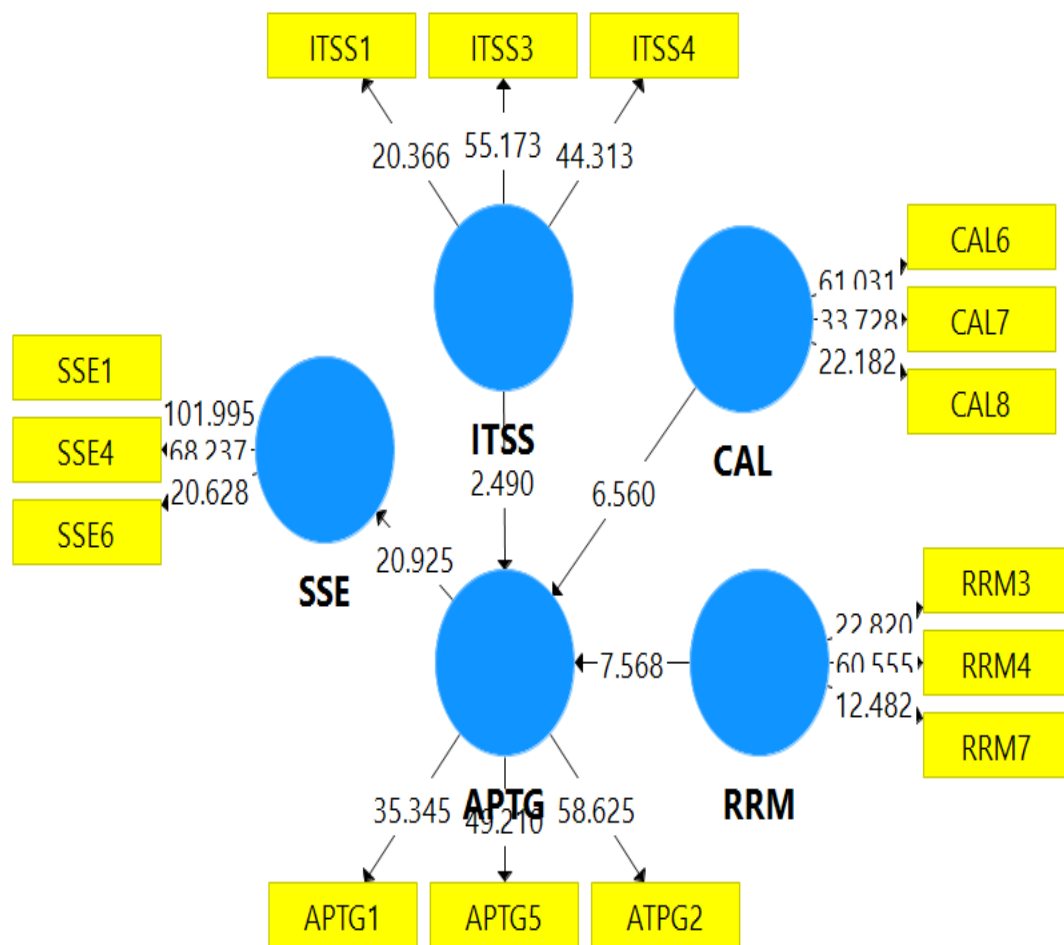


Figure.3:

Predictive Relevance of the Model

R-square and Stone-Cross-Validated Geisser's Redundancy were used to assess the predictive validity of the structural model construct (Q square). The value of R-squared is an important criterion for evaluating the PLS-SEM structural model and is known as the coefficient of determination (Hair et al., 2013). The minimal acceptable R-squared value is 0.10. (Falk & Miller, 1992). Table 13 reveals that the Attitude of Peers and Teachers Group (APTG) of CARIS explains 77 percent (R-square = 0.777) and Students Self-Esteem 63% (R-square= 0.639) of self-esteem of students, which indicates that the current research has achieved the required value of R-square. In addition, the importance of Cross-Validation Redundancy (Q square) was checked to ensure the research model consistency (Stone, 1974). The Q square value > 0 of the Attitude of Peers and Teachers Group (Q Square = 0.608) and students' self-esteem (Q Square =0.524) reveals that the research model's predictive relevance was established. Hall and Cohen (1988) define small, moderate, and large effects as f2 values

of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively. The table presents the effect size (f^2) of all the factors of CARIS, which describes that the inclusive teaching skills and strategies (ITSS) have a weak effect on the self-esteem of students, while curriculum and academic literature (CAL) and rights of a religious minority (RRM) of CARIS used in this study have a strong effect on the self-esteem of university students.

Table 13: Predictive relevance of the construct

	Adjusted R-Square	Q-Square
Attitude of Peers and Teachers Group (APTG)	0.777	0.608
Students Self-Esteem (SSE)	0.639	0.524

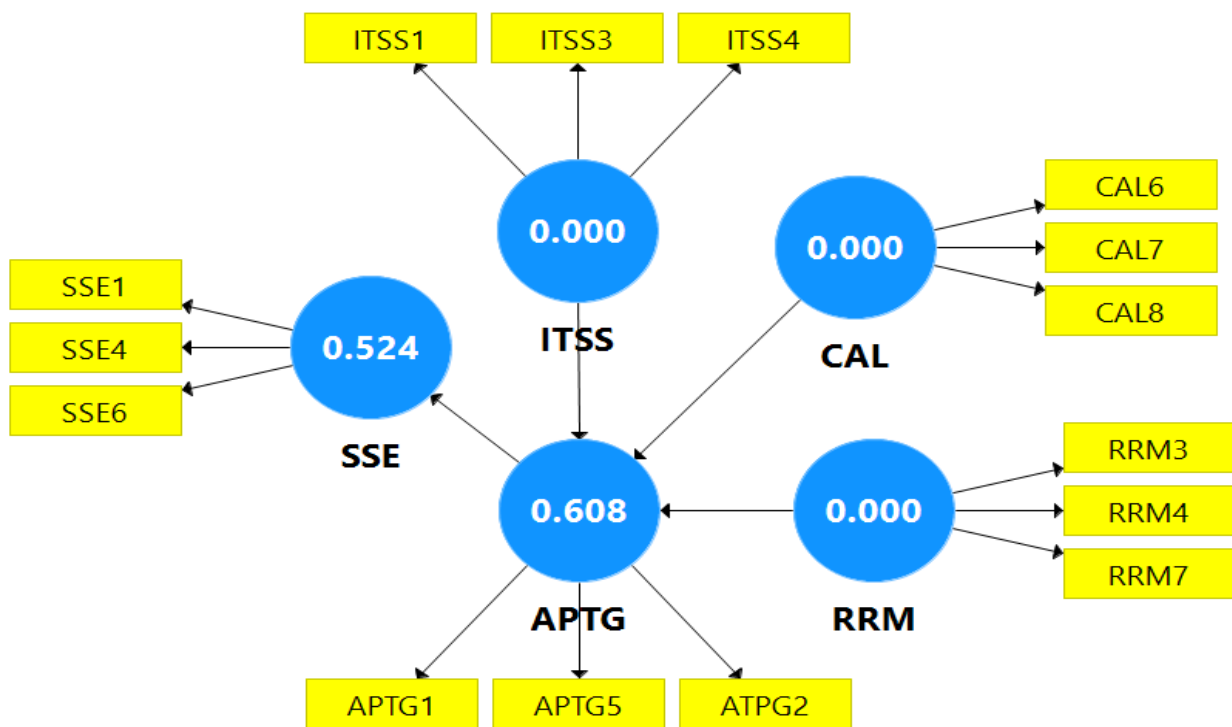


Figure.4:

Discussion

This study was carried out to evaluate the issues. Using a self-created questionnaire with the constructs curriculum and academic literature (CAL), peers' and teachers' attitudes (APTG), inclusive teaching techniques and strategies (ITSS), and rights of a religious minority (RRM), challenges of non-Muslim students at the university level in Pakistan have a significant positive impact on students' self-esteem. The SmartPLS tested four hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4). The result revealed that the four factors, CAL, APTG, ITSS, and RRM, significantly affect students' self-esteem.

The study's results reveal a significant difference between the perception of non-muslim students regarding their age and the program in which they enrolled in university. A significant difference was found in their age because 36 years of age and other programs showed the differences (Iqbal, 2015; Ahmad, Rashid, & Ali, 2023). However, no difference was found in the perceptions of non-muslim students regarding their university type, gender and province-wise. It showed that students showed the same perception in the province, university type and gender.

The result of the current study is consistent with the previous literature, which observed a significant effect of problems and challenges of non-Muslim students concerning curriculum and academic literature, the attitude of peers and teachers groups, inclusive teaching skills and strategies, and rights and religious minority on the self-esteem of students (Batoool, 2018; Rahman & Akram, 2020; Yousuf & Barrech, 2022; Rahman, 2021; Akram et al., 2021).

However, among the four predictors investigated in the current study, RRM has the highest significant positive effect ($f^2 = 0.588$), CAL has a medium effect ($f^2 = 0.212$), and ITSS ($f^2 = 0.055$) has a very weak effect. The result guided us to infer that the self-esteem of university students from all over Pakistan relies heavily on the problems and challenges facing them, including curriculum and academic literature, the attitude of peers and teachers groups, inclusive teaching skills and strategies, and rights and religious minority such as improving the academic literature and curriculum for a non-Muslim student enrolled in different universities of Pakistan, reading material, teaching aids and other classroom facilities, the attitude of peers and teachers group enhance their motivation and sense of respect for non-muslim students, inclusive teaching skills and strategies which enhance their learning motivation in the classroom, so on and rights and religious minority such freedom and availability of separate space to perform their religious activities and celebrate their religious events.

Non-Muslim students from all over Pakistan are experiencing several issues, many concerning their curriculum and academic literature, that negatively impact their self-esteem. Pakistan has a prevalent phenomenon of inadequate academic literature and curriculum in both public and private universities. Another challenge that non-muslim university students experience is the attitude of their peers and professors group when they listen to statements and remarks made by their colleagues and lecturers. This element reduces their motivation for higher education at the university level. Inclusive teaching skills and strategies also create problems for non-Muslim students to learn better at the university level. The rights and religion of minority another factor because they do not find a separate place to perform their

religious activities and celebrate their religious events. The current research findings portray the general perception of students in different public and private universities in Pakistan struggling with issues. The current research also found that the CAL, APTG, ITSS, and RRM also significantly impact the self-esteem of non-Muslim students at the university level. These findings are similar to those of the researchers who found that perceptions of male and female students at the university level are the same (Mehfooz, 2021).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the problems and challenges faced by non-Muslim university students in Pakistan and to establish how these issues affect their self-esteem; for this purpose following factors are discussed to know the problems and challenges of non-Muslim students at the university level in Pakistan. 1st factor was curriculum and academic literature in which students described their views on higher education 2ndond. Did teachers use inclusive teaching skills strategies to handle the class at the university level in Pakistan? 3rd variable was the attitude of peers and teacher groups toward non-Muslim students at the university level. 4th factors were constitutional rights and religious minorities of non-Muslim students and the self-esteem of students. Non-muslim students discussed their perceptions. In this study, a questionnaire Curriculum and literature, attitudes of peers and teachers' groups, rights and religious minorities, inclusive teaching skills strategies, and student self-esteem (CARIS) were developed to ascertain the perceptions of non-Muslim students at the university level from all over Pakistan. The population comprised all non-Muslim students attending Pakistani universities that were chosen using purposive sampling. Results revealed that all four factors significantly positively affect the student's self-esteem.

Additionally, Results showed the highest level of students' perceptions regarding the phenomenon. There was no significant difference among male and female students, public and private institutes, and province-wise. A significant difference was found among non-Muslim students regarding their age and program. The study recommended that greater effort be put into addressing non-Muslim students' concerns with academic content and literature, encouraging positive peer and teacher interactions at the university level in Pakistan, providing them full rights and freedom to non-muslim as given them by the Constitution of Pakistan, inclusive teaching skills and strategies used by teachers in the class which enhance the self-esteem of non-muslim students at university level in Pakistan and motivate them for achieving higher education.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been made:

- The current research found that the curriculum and academic literature significantly positively affect students' self-esteem at the university level. Therefore, the academic literature and curriculum of higher education institutions all over Pakistan should be improved and modified according to the needs of non-Muslim students. The curriculum should be modified and flexible for non-Muslim students, which motivates them to higher education. Academic literature should be more focused on the learning of non-Muslim students, ensuring that classroom teaching and learning are aligned with the needs of students and improving student self-esteem.
- The current study revealed that the attitude of peers and teachers toward non-Muslim students at the university level significantly positively affects their self-esteem. Therefore, it is recommended that the attitude of peers in the classroom directly affect the self-esteem of non-Muslim students. The attitude of teachers is also very important to non-Muslim students, which impacts their learning. Teachers should monitor and evaluate the student's work with a positive attitude and deal with them like other students, and differences should be shown. Participate in co-curricular activities and have regular meetings with non-Muslim students to discuss their issues and progress, and encourage non-Muslim students to use innovative techniques to improve their learning at the university level.
- The current study provided reasonable evidence to support that inclusive teaching skills and strategies have a significant positive effect on university students' self-esteem. Thus the study recommends that university teachers adopt inclusive teaching skills and strategies to improve their classroom teaching all over Pakistan by appreciating the non-Muslim students' work and sharing their exemplary work with other students in the classroom. It is also recommended that the university teacher adopt the skills they can teach better to Muslim and non-Muslim students in the class with inclusive teaching strategies.
- The current study shows that rights and a religious minority for non-Muslim students have a significant and positive effect on their self-esteem at the university level. So, a separate place for non-Muslim students should be allocated to offer their religious rites. The competent authorities of universities from all over Pakistan should focus on

the rights of minorities and deal with them with equality on the university premises to improve the self-esteem of non-Muslim students, which motivates them to learn.

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